

THE  
MANNER of VISITING  
THE  
MONASTERIES  
OF  
*DISCALCED NUNS.*



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*A Brief Discourse, wherein the Fathers Provincial and  
Visitors are directed how in their Visitations to proceed  
with their Subjects; who are commanded likewise how  
to carry themselves toward their Superiors, and to-  
ward one another, with the greater spiritual ad-  
vantage.*

**F**irst, I confess the Imperfection, I have shewed in my beginning this Tract, as to what concerns *Obedience*; a Virtus, I more desire, than any thing in the World. The undertaking, It hath been a very great Mortification to me, and I have used great reluctance; our *Lord* grant, I may succeed in something, I say; since I trust only in his Mercy, and in the humility of him, who hath commanded me to write it; that for this, *God* will do the work, as powerfull, and not regard me.

Though it seems not convenient to begin with the Temporal, yet so it hath seemed to me; that, for the Spiritual improvement, it imports much (though in *Monasteries* of Poverty it seems otherwife, but yet in all it is of concernment) to keep good order, and take an account of the managing of every thing. Prelupposing first, that it becomes a *Superior* principally so to demean himself toward these his Subjects, that, though, on the one side he be affable, and discover a love to them, yet on the other he let them know, that in substantial matters he is to be rigorous, and inflexible. I do not conceive, any thing in the World doth a *Superior* so much mischief, as the not being feared; and, for his Subjects to think to treat with him, as their fellow; and *Womēn* especially: for, if once they perceive in the *Superior* such a flexibleness, as to pass by their faults, and change his mind, lest they grow discontented, it will be very difficult to govern them.

It is extreme necessary, they should understand there is a Head, who will shew no favour in any thing that may prove a diminution of *Religious Discipline*; and that the *Judge* is so strict in administering Justice, that let them be confident, he will not twerve from what tends most to *Gods* service, and greater Perfection, though the World sink; and will be affable, and kind to them, as far as he perceives them not deficient herein. For, as it is necessary to shew himself mild, and like a Father, loving toward them (which conduceth much to their consolation, and to the end

they be not alienated from him) so is this other necessary too. And, when one must faile in one of these two, it is a less ill without comparison to faile in the latter, the being very gentle, and kind ; than in the former, the being strict, and impartial. For, the *Visitations* being but once a Year, in going about with love to correct, and make them leave their faults, by a little and little, except the *Nuns* understand, that, at the Years end, those, they have committed, are to be amended, and punished ; a Year, or two will run out, and *Religious Discipline* come to be relaxed : so that when they would remedy it, they cannot. And, though the fault should be only the *Prioreffe's*, the *Nuns* being once used to a relaxation, should they put in another *Prioreffs*, yet Custome in our Nature is a terrible thing : and by little and little, and in small matters, they come to bring irremidable mischiefs on the *Order*. And the *Superior*, who in time remedies it not, shall render a dreadful account thereof to *God*.

I seem to do an injury to these *Monasteries* of the *Virgin our Lady*, in treating of such things as these ; since, through the goodness of our *Lord*, they are now so far from needing this Severity : but, fearing that relaxation, Time is wont to make in *Monasteries*, by not attending those Beginnings, I am forced to say this ; and although it is seen, that every day, through *Gods Mercy*, they go on improving, yet in some of them perhaps some breach had happened, if the *Superiors* had not done what I am speaking of ; that is, proceed with this rigour in redressing petty matters, and discharging the *Superioreffes*, they perceived unfit for this purpose. In this particularly it is necessary to shew no pity : for, many that are very holy will not be fit *Superioreffes* ; and it must be remedied speedily ; since, where is practised so great Mortification, and the exercises of Humility, she will not take it for an injury : and, if she do, it is evident, she is not fit for the Office : inasmuch as she ought not to govern Souls so much practising Perfection, who hath so little thereof, as to desire to be *Superioreffes*.

He that is to visit therefore had need to set before him *God*, and the service, he doth these Housles, that they be not impaired by his means ; and let him reject certain Compassions, which most commonly the Devil raiseth from some great mischief, and which are the highest cruelty, he can use toward his Subjects.

It is impossible, all those, who shall be chosen *Superioreffes*, should have Talents for such an Office ; which when discovered, in no wise let the first Year expire without displacing her. For, in one Year she may do much harm ; and, in three, may ruine the *Monastery*, by making a Custome

Custome of her Imperfections : and the doing this is so very important, that, though the *Superior* be very averse, as coaceiving her a Saint, and not having a wrong intention, yet let him force himself so far, as not to leave her in the *Office*. This I request him for the love of our *Lord*. And, when he perceives, that these who are to elect, proceed with any partiality and passion (which *God* forbid) let him null the Election, and nominate a *Priores* out of other *Monasteries*, wishing them to chuse her : for, of an Election made after such sort, never can good issue come. I know not, whether this, I have said, be *Temporal*, or *Spiritual*.

That, which I would begin to say is, that the Books of Expence be looked into with great care, and diligence, and let not this be passed lightly by : in \* the Houses that have Rents especially, it is very requisite, that the expence be ordered with proportion to the Income, though they shift as they can ; since, *God* be praised, all, that have Revenue, enjoy sufficient : and, if they spend with moderation, they may live very well ; otherwise, by little and little, if they begin to be in *Debt*, they will go to ruine : for, being in great want, the *Superiors* will think it inhumanity, not to allow themselves their own labours, and let their kindred provide for each of them ; and the like, as the custome now is in other places ; whereas I had rather without comparison see a *Monastry* dissolved, than reduced to this state : and for this it is, that I said, that from the *Temporal* great inconveniences are wont to come upon the *Spiritual*. This therefore is of much importance.

In Houses of *Poverty* he must be extreme vigilant, and careful that they do not contract Debts : for, if they have faith, and serve *God*, they shall not want, since they spend not excessively. In both the one, and the other he must know particularly the *Diet*, that is given the *Nuns* ; and how they treat the *Sick*, looking that they be supplied with sufficient necessaries ; for, this our *Lord* never fails to give ; provided, there be in the *Superiores* Courage, and Diligence. This is already seen by experience.

He must observe both in the one, and the other, the work that is done : and likewise to compute the Gains of their Handiwork is beneficial for two things. One is, to animate, and thank them for what they have done. The other, that, in the Houses where there is not so much care taken of working, because they have not so much need, they may be told, what the *Nuns* get in other places ; for, this taking account of their labour, besides the temporal benefit, is every way very profitable : and it is a consolation to them when they work, to understand, that the

*Superior* is to see it; because, though this be not a matter of importance, they are to bear with Women of such strict *Clauſure*, and whose whole content lies in pleasing the *Superior*, condescending sometimes in this kind to our weakness. He is to inform himself, whether there be any extraordinary entertainments; this is especially needful in Houses endowed, which are able to do more in this particular, and thus *Monasteries* come to be ruined by things which seem of small importance. If the *Superioreſſes* happen to be expensive, they may leave the *Nuns* destitute of *Victuals*, by over-liberal giving, as is seen in some places. And therefore it is necessary to consider, what may be done proportionably to the Revenue, and the Alms that may be given, and in every thing to put a limit, and measure.

• He must not permit enlargements of their Houses; and that, for the curious Workmanship and Vanity therein, they run in Debt, except on urgent necessity; and therefore it were requisite to enjoin, that no Work be undertaken without giving the *Superior* notice, and an account what there is to do it with, that he may, according to the Stock, grant, or deny, leave. This is not meant of a small matter, which can cause no great harm; but that it were better to bear the incommodeſſy of a house not very good, than be disturbed, give scandal, run in Debt, and want *Victuals*.

It imports much that there be an Inspection made into the whole House, to see what *Clauſure*, and *Recollection* there is; for, it is good to remove the occasions, and not trust the sanctity that appears now, how much foever it be, because none knows what it will be. And so it is necessary to forecast all the ill that may follow, to remove (as I said) the occasion; and especially, that the *Locutories* have two *Grates*, one on the out-side, another on the in-side, and that through neither of them one can put their hand. This imports much; as also to look that the *Confessionals* have the Curtains nailed; and that the *Window* from Communicating be little: that the *Gate* have two Bolts, and that of the *Cloſter* two Keyes, as the *Constitutions* enjoin; one let the *Porter* keep, the other the *Prioreſſe*. I see the practice already is so; but, lest it should be forgotten, I insert it here; for, they are things, which must ever be looked to, and let the *Nuns* see they have an eye to it, that there be no neglect therein.

It concerns Him much to inform himself concerning the *Confeffors*, and likewise the *Chaplain*; and that there be not much communication, save about necessaries; and to enquire very particularly hereof from the *Nuns*, and of the *Recollection* of the House. And, if any one be tempted,

tempted, to hear her very patiently ; for, though many times that, which is not true, will seem so to her, and she will aggravate it, he may take notice of her information, so to learn the truth from the rest, laying his commands upon such Persons, and reprehend them afterward with severity, that they may be afraid, and do so no more. And, when, without the *Prioreff's* fault, any shall pry into small matters, or relate things with exaggeration, they must be dealt with rigorously, and made to understand their blindness, that they be no further troublesome ; for, when they see, they gain nothing thereby, but that they are discovered, they will be desist. For, being not matters of importance, they are always to favour the *Superioreffes* therein, though faults must be remedied ; for, the simplicity of perfect Obedience would be a great step toward the quiet of Inferiors. For, the Devil might tempt some, in imagining, they understand a thing better than the *Superioreff*, and so going on to observe things that import little, whereby they may do much harm. These things the *Superiors* discretion will easily understand, thereby to effect in them some improvement ; though, if they be Melancholick, he will have much ado. To such no gentlenes is to be shewn ; for, if they think they shall speed in any one thing, they will never cease to be troublesome, nor desist : but let them always know, they are to be punished, and, for this reason, the *Superioreff* is to be countenanced.

If haply any one desire, they would remove her to another *Monasterie*, she must be answered so, as that neither she, nor any other may ever conceive it a thing possible. For, none (unless having seen it by experience) can imagine the monstrous inconveniences therein, and what a Gate is opened to the Devil for Temptations, if once they think it possible to get out of the House, upon the urgent occasions, which, to this purpose, they would alledge. And, though it be to be allowed, they must not understand it to be so upon their desiring it, but other pretences must be found ; for, she will never settle any where, and will do much harm to the rest : but let them know, that the *Nun*, which shall desire to remove from her House, shall never gain credit with the *Superior* in any matter ; and, though he had meant to have taken her abroad ; taken her abroad, I say, for some necessity, or some *Foundation*, yet that for that very reason he would not do it. And it is good to do thus ; for, these temptations never assault any, but Melancholick Persons, or those of such a temper, as are not fit for doing much service : and perhaps, it would do well, before any one treat of such a matter, for the *Superior* to make some discourse thereof, how ill a thing it is, and how bad an opinion he should have of any one that lay under this kind of

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Temptation, mentioning the reasons ; and how that now none any more may go forth ; though hitherto there were occasions, that made it necessary so to employ them.

Let him enquire, whether the *Priores* hold particular friendship with any, doing more for her, than for the rest ; for otherwise it is not to be heeded, unless it prove very iramoderate : because the *Priores* have need of conversing more with those, that are of better understanding, and more discreet. And, since our nature suffers us not to account our selves what indeed we are, every one thinks her self as good as others : and by this means the Devil may put this Temptation into the minds of some ; For that, where there are no great matters from occasions abroad, he goes finding out some small things at home, that there may be always a War, and merit in resisting him : and so they will be imagining that such or such a Person, or Persons govern the *Priores*. Therefore, if there be any excels [of familiarity] it must be moderated ; For it is a great temptation to the weak ; but not therefore altogether to be forborn ; because, as I said, they may be such Persons, as this may be necessity : yet it is always good, to take special care of not having much intimacy with any. And it may soon be known, how the matter goes.

There are some so out of measure perfect, to their thinking, that all they see, seems to them a defect : and these are ever they, that have most defects, and discern them not in themselves ; but lay all the fault upon the poor *Priores*, and others : and so may deceive the *Superior*, in his desiring to remedy that which is fit to be done ; and therefore, for a sufficient ground to amend any thing, it is necessary, not to credit one alone, but to enquire of more. For, where so much rigour is practised, it would be a thing intolerable, if every *Superior*, at every *Visitation*, should still make new Orders : so that, unless it be in important matters, and (as I said) upon good information from the same *Priores*, and others, concerning what is to be amended, and the cause, and manner how it is done, they are to lexe severe Injunctions : for, they may impose so much, that, unable to bear it, the main scope of the *Rule* may be neglected. That, wherein the *Superior* is to be especially careful, is, that the *Constitutions* be observed : and, where there shall be a *Priores*, that takes the liberty to break them for a small cause, or makes a custome thereof, thinking this thing, or that to import little, let it be held for certain, that she will do great harm to the House ; which Time will evidence, though, presently, it appear not. And this is the reason, why some *Monasteries*, and also *Orders* too are so decayed in some places, by little regarding small faults ; whereby they come to fall likewise into the greatest.

Let him frequently admonish all in publick, to declare, when there is a failing herein in the *Monastery*; for that, if he come to know it, he will very severely punish her, who shall not acquaint him. This will make the *Priores* fear, and proceed with caution. It is necessary not to comply with them, whether they find it displeasing, or not; but let them know, that thus it must ever go; and that the chief reason of putting her in the Office is, to enforce the keeping of the *Rule*, and *Constitutions*, and not of her own head to expunge, or add; and that there is to be one that observes her, and informs the *Visitor* concerning her.

I hold it impossible for the *Priores* to discharge her Office, that doth any thing, which she dislikes the *Visitor* should see; for, it is a signe, that that is not very justifiable in the service of *God*, which I would not have him to know, who is in his stead. So also the *Superior* is diligently to observe, if there be plainness, and truth in the things that are treated with him; and, if not, let him reprehend it with great severity, and procure it for here-after; disposing, as is fit, in order thereto the *Priores*, and those in office, and using other diligences. For, though they do not lye, some things may be concealed; and there is no reason, that, being the Head by whose direction they are to live, He should be debarred from knowing all. Since hardly can the Body do any good without the Head; and it is no less, if they conceal, that from him, which he is to amend. I conclude with this; that, so the *Constitutions* be observed, all will go plain: and, if there be not great caution in this, and in keeping of the *Rules*, *Visitations* will profit little, which are appointed chiefly for this end, unleas it be in their changing the *Priores*, and even the *Nuns* too, (if there be a custome already contracted) to introduce others, who may be exact in the Discipline of the *Order* (which is just as if the House were begun anew): and so to put every one of them apart in another *Monastery*, dispersing them, since one or two can do little hurt in a well-ordered House.

It is to be noted, that there may be found a *Priores*, who will desire a liberty for some things, that are against the *Constitutions*, and perhaps will alledge arguments to her thinking sufficient, because she understands no better, or (which *God* forbid) would fain perswade the *Superior* of their conveniency. And, though they be not [directly] against the *Constitutions*, they may be secretly, so that it may prove prejudicial to admit them; for, he, being not present, knows not what may be; and we know how to aggravate what we desire. Therefore, possibly, it were best not to open a Gate for any thing to enter at, except it accord with the present state of things, since it is evident how well they prosper;

and manifest by experience, that what is certain excels what is doubtful. And in such cases the *Superior* must be resolute, and not stick to say Nay ; but with that freedom, and holy dominion, I speake of at the beginnig, not to heed the pleasing, more than displeasing the *Prioreffes*, or *Nuns*, as to that, which in time may breed some inconvenience : its Novelty is sufficient prejudice to its Beginning.

In granting Licences for receiving of *Nuns*, it concerns very much, that the *Superior* grant it not, till due information be made to him. And, if he be in a place where he can enquire, let him do it himself. For, there may be *Prioreffes* so desirous of admitting *Nuns*, as that they are satisfied with a little. And, because they would have it so, and say, they are sufficiently informed, their Subjects almost always comply with their desires ; and it may be, for friendship, or kindred, or other respects the *Prioreffes* may be biassed by some particular affection, thinking she goes right, when she erres. Now, as to the admitting them, that may afterward be easilier amended ; but, for the professing them, a very great diligence is requisite ; and that at the time of the *Visitations* the *Superior* be acquainted, whether there be any *Novices*, and how they behave themselves : that, if any be not fit, he may make use of such advertisement at the time of granting the Licence for their *Profession*. For, it is possible, the *Prioreffes* may like a *Nun* well, or have some interest of her own, and that the Subjects dare not speak their opinion, yet will tell it the *Superior*. So that, if it were possible, it were a sure course to defer the Professing them, if nigh, till the *Superior* make his *Visitation* : and likewise, if he think good, to bid them send him their Votes in private, as at an *Election* ; for, it is of such consequence to let nothing continue in the House, which may trouble, and disquiet them all their lite, that any diligence whatsoever herein will be well employed.

In admitting *Lay Sisters* much caution is necessary. For, almost all *Prioreffes* love to have many *Lay-Sisters*, and the *Houses* are charged, and with those sometimes that can work little. So that it is very necessary not to comply presently with them, unless there seem considerable need : let enquiry be made of those who are there ; for, except caution be used, much harm may be done. In every *House* care is ever to be taken, that the Number of *Nuns* be not filled up, but that some places lye void. Because one may be presented for a *Nun*, whom it were very advantageous for the *House* to admit, and there is no room. Again to exceed the Number appointed is in no wise to be yielded to, which is to open a Gate to, and imports no less than, the destruction of the *Monasteries*. And therefore it is better, that the benefit of one should cease, rather

rather than all receive harm. If the Number be not compleat in any other House, a *Nun* may remove thither, for another to be admitted: and, if she, whom they change, brought a Portion, or Alms, let it be given her, since she goes for altogether: and thus some remedy may be found; but, if this may not be, let the loss prove what it will, but let not a thing be begun so pernicious to all. The *Superior*, when they request his Licence for admitting any, is to be acquainted, what Number there is already, that he may see what is fit; for, there is no reason a matter of such consequence should be trusted only with the *Priores*.

The *Visitor* must enquire, whether the *Priores* add to that which they are obliged to; as well in saying the *Office*, as in *Penances*. For, it may happen, that every one may at her pleasure add things so singular, and be so troublesome therein, that the *Nuns* overcharged may lose their health, and be disabled from performing their standing duties. This is not to be understood, when some necessity, for a Day, presents it self; but some may grow so indiscreet, as to make it a Custome, as it is wont to fall out; and the *Nuns* dare not speak, conceiving it little devotion in them; nor is it fit they should speak of it, save to the *Superior*.

Let him observe what is done in the *Quire*, as well Sung, as said; and examine, if they keep the stops; and, what they sing, be in a low voice, suitable to our profession, that may edify others: for, the singing loud hath two inconveniences; the one, that it looks ill, not to keep the true note; the other, that the modesty, and spirit of our way of living are thereby lost. And, if herein great caution be not used, there will be some excess, and the *Auditors* will lose their devotion: but let their Voices be somewhat mortified, rather than discover, that they seek to please those that hear them; this being now almost general; and, the custome so confirmed, as it seems incurable: so that it is needful much to inculcate it.

It will be to very good purpose, that, touching such important matters as he shall enjoin, the *Superior* should under Obedience before the *Priores* command one [of the Sisters] to write him word, when-ever they are neglected; and that the *Priores* should understand, that she can do no less. This in part will serve, as if the *Superior* himself were present, to make them use more care, and circumspection not to exceed in any thing.

It will be expedient, for him effectually to exaggerate, before he begin his *Visitation*, the great mischief that comes by the *Priores* stoma-cking those *Sisters*, who tell the *Superiors* their faults, if any occur

to them, though they be not certain thereof: since, as they conceive, they are in conscience obliged hereto: and this, from whence occasion of Mortification is offered her, should please the *Superioreſſ*, since they further her in the better discharging her place, and serving our *Lord*. And, if this be the cause of her disliking the *Nuns*, it is a sure Signe, that ſhe is not fit to govern them; for, at another time they will not dare to ſpeak; as conſidering, the *Superior* muſt depart, and they remain in trouble, and thus all will go relaſing. Now, for his admoniſhing them herein he is not to truſt the Sa. Day that is in the *Superioreſſes*, how great ſoever it be; because ſuch is our Nature (and the Enemy, when he hath nothing elie to repair himſelf with, attacks u. mainly here) that peradventure he gains in this, what, in other things, he loſeth.

Stricſt ſe r fy in eve y thing is very requiſite in the *Superior*, and to keep the *Superioreſſes* from knowing, who accuſeſth her; ſince (as I ſaid) they live yet upon Earth: and, were there no more, it prevents ſome temptation; how much more, when much harm alſo may follow thereon.

If the things reported of the *Prioreſſes* be not of conſequeneſſe, they may be told her by the by, without her knowing that the *Nuns* ſpoke them: for, the more it can be diſguifeſd that they have ſaid any thing, the better ſtill. But, when they be things of importance, the remedying them is more to be regarded, than the not diſpleaſing her.

He muſt enquire, whether any Money comes to the hands of the *Superioreſſes* without the *Key-keepers* knowledge; which imports much (for, without advertising them of it, this may be done unwittingly): nor let her ever poſſeſſ any, but as the *Conſtitution* enjoins. In the Houſes of *Poverty* this is alſo neceſſary. I think I have elſewhere ſaid this, and ſo other things too; but, it being ſome time ſince, I have forgoſten it, and not buſyng my ſelf in reviewing it, I leave it thus.

It is a great trouble for a *Superior* to attend to ſo many particuſars, as are here, but he will finde a greater, when he ſees the little good done, where theſe are not obſerved. And, as I ſaid, be they never ſo holy, the *Sifters* muſt know (the main of all for governing of *Women*, as I intimated at firſt) they have a Head, that is not to be moved by any earthly thing, but will maintain, and make them obſerve all the *Order's Laws*; and pañiſh the contrary, looking that ſpecial care be taken hereof in e-very Houſe; and not only will viſit every Year, but know, what they do every day; whereby Perfection will rather go on increasing, than impairing: because *Women* for the moſt part are addiſed to *Reputation*, and *Fear*. What I have ſaid conduces much to their not growing negli-gent:

ligent: and sometimes, when there is need, let it not be said only, but done; for, by one all will take example. And, if for pity the contrary be done, or for other respects at the beginning, when there are but few faults, he will be forced afterward to do it with more severity, and these parties will prove the greatest Cruelty, and make him render a strict account thereof to *God our Lord*.

There are some so very simple, as to think it a great fault in them, to speak of the *Priorey's* defects, in matters that should be remedied: and who account it a baseness; an unworthy action: they must be admonished what they are to do: as also that they before-hand advertise the *Superiorress* with humility when they see her to fail in a *Constitution*, or in any matters of importance: and, possibly, she is not faulty therein; but it may happen, that those Persons, who affirmed, she did so, because they are disgusted with her, may accuse her. There is great ignorance in discerning what they ought to do in these *Visitations*; and therefore the *Superior* had need by his discretion to go on advertising, and teaching them.

It is very necessary, that he should be acquainted what is done with the *Confessors*, and that not from one, or two, but all the *Nuns*, and the authority given them; for, since he is not the *Vicar*, nor is to be, and this is ordained, for restraining his power, there must be no communication with them; but very sparingly, and the less, the better. In treatments, and Civilities, let great caution be used; though sometimes something cannot be avoided.

It is likewise requisite to advise the *Prioreyess* not to be too profuse, and sumptuous, but to take care how they are bound to observe what they spend, since they are but only as House-wives: and are not too lavish, as of their own Stock, but as is fit, with much caution, that there be no excess: since, besides their giving no ill example, they are obliged in conscience hereto, and to preserve the temporals, and retain to themselves nothing in particular more than all the rest, unless it be a *Key* of some little *Trunk* for keeping *Papers*; I mean *Letters*; for, especially if they be any Instructions of the *Superiors*, it is reasonable, they should not be seen.

He is to look, that their *Head-clothes*, and *Apparel* be according to the *Constitution*: and, if at any time he findes any thing (which *God* forbid) that seems curious, or not tending to edification; let him cause it to be burnt in his presence. For, by doing so once, they will be afraid, and mend presently, and remember it for those that are to come.

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He is also to observe their manner of speaking, that it be with Simplicity, plainness, and beseeming Religion, which useth rather the Stile of *Hermites*, and Persons retired, than to take up expressions of Novelty, and Phrases ( for, so I think they call them in the World ) there being always new Modes of speaking. Let them more value the being clownish, than curious in these things.

As much as may be possibly, let him prevent *Law-suits*; unless they cannot do otherwise: for, our *Lord* will give them some other way, what they lose this. Let him always incite them to the observing that which is of greater Perfection; and enjoin them, neither to commence, nor prosecute any *Law-suit* without acquainting the *Superior*, and having his special Order.

As likewise concerning those who are to be admitted, let him admonish them, to value more the *Talents* of such Persons, than the *Portions* they bring; and for no respect to admit any, except according to what the *Constitutions* enjoin; especially, if there be any defect in their manners.

It is necessary to carry on what at present is practised by the *Superiors*, whom our *Lord* hath given us, from whom I have taken much of that, which I have said here, seeing their Visitations; especially in this point, that no intimacy be held with one *Sister*, more than with the rest, by staying with her alone, or writing to her, but let the *Superior* shew a common affection to all jointly, as a true *Father*. For, when-ever in any *Monastery* particular amity is taken up, though such as that of S. *Hierom*, and S. *Paula*, it shall not be free from Detraction; as they were not free. Nor will it do harm to that House, but all the rest; for, the Devil, to gain thereby, will soon divulge it; and, for our sins, the World is so fondly addicted to it, that many inconveniences may ensue, as at present is seen. For the same reason the *Superior* is less esteemed, and that general love lost, which, if he be, what he ought, all will ever bear him; as conceiving, that he confines his affection only to one Person; whereas it is very beneficial, to be greatly beloved of all. This should not be understood concerning certain times when necessary occasions present themselves, but concerning matters considerable, and excessive.

Let him remember, when he enters the *Monasteries*, at his coming in to visit the *Clausure* of the House; which, it is fit, he should always do, and strictly look to the whole House, as hath been said already, and that he ever go with his Companion, together with the *Prioress*, and some *Nuns*; but, in no wise, though it be Morning, let him stay to eat in the *Monastery*

*Monastery*, notwithstanding they should importune him to it ; only let him see how things stand, and instantly dispatch to be gone : for, as for speaking with any, it is better done at the Grate. For, though it may be done with all sincerity, and plainness, it is laying a beginning, because there may in tract of Time come one, to whom, it is not convenient to allow so much liberty : and, if any desire to take more, our *Lord* grant, it be not permitted ; but that these things tending to edifying be ever done, and all the rest, as is now practised. *Amen, Amen.*

Let not the *Visitor* consent to any excess in the Meals they provide him on those days whereon he visits, but only receive what is fit. If he perceive the contrary, let him reprove it sharply. For, it agrees not with the profession of the *Prioreffes*, which is, being poor ; nor with that of the *Nuns* ; and serves for nothing ; since they eat only what sufficeth them ; besides, that it doth not edify the *Nuns* herein, as is fit. For the present, should there be some *Excess*, I conceive it will finde little remedy, by reason the *Superior* we have, minds not, whether they give him little, or much, bad, or good ; nor do I know whether he could understand it, unless he set his mind much upon it. He thinks it a great matter that he should be alone, whilst he makes his Scrutiny, without a Companion ; because, if there be any failing in the *Nuns*, he would not have him hear it ; an admirable course, that the fooleries of the *Nuns*, if any be, may not be known ; for, at present, *God* be praised, it can do little harm ; because the *Superior* looks upon it, and takes notice of it as a *Father*, and, as such, keeps it in mind ; and *God* discovers to him (as being in his stead) the importance of the busyness. He that is not so affected, will perhaps think that much, which is nothing ; and, because it greatly concerns not himself, makes little scruple in relating of it, and so without cause the *Monastery* comes to lose its credit. Our *Lord* grant, the *Superiors* may look to it, to do always as he doth.

It is not expedient, he that is *Superior*, should discover, that he affects the *Prioreff* much, or is very well pleased with her, at least before the rest ; for, it will make them cowardly, and not dare to mention her defects. But let him carefully remember, it is necessary, they should understand, he will not justify Her, but remedy them, if any thing be to be mended. For, there is no affliction like that of a Soul, that is zealous for *God*, and for her *Order*, when she is grieved to see it go declining, and hopes the *Superior* shoud remedy things, yet findes, they continue so still ; for, in such case she turns to *God*, resolving thenceforward to be silent, though all sink, seeing, how little she thereby availes. And, because the poor Wretches are heard but once, when call-

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ed to the Scrutiny, and the *Prioreffes* have time enough to excuse their failings, and alledge reasons, and extenuate things, yea perhaps to make the poor Creature, that spoke it, suspected of doing it out of Passion, (for, more or less, she understands, without their telling her, who it is) and the *Superior* hath no Witness; so that things come to be related in such sort, that, it seems, he cannot chuse but believe them; by this means, all continues as it was: for, might one witness it, he would know the truth within a few days; whereas the *Prioreffes* think they speak truth; but this self-love is such a thing, that it is a wonder, if we take the blame upon us, or know our selves.

This hath befallen me very often; and that with *Prioreffes* great Servants of *God*, whom I credited so far, that me thought the thing was impossible to be otherwise; and, living some days in the *House*, I remained astonished, to see so much the contrary of what she told me, and in a matter of Moment; for, she made me think it was their passion, though it was almost half the *Covent*; whereas it was she, that understood not her self, as afterward she came to know. I conceive, the Devil, not having many occasions wherein to tempt these *Sisters*, tempts the *Prioreffes*, to the end they may frame opinions in certain things of them, and see how they brook them. All tends to the praising our *Lord*. So that, I am resolv'd to believe none, till I have informed my self sufficiently, that I may make her, who is deceived, understand, that she is so: for, unless this course be taken, things will be hardly remedied.

All this is not in matters of consequence; but, from these, they may ascend to higher, if they proceed not with caution. I am astonished to see the subtily of the Devil, and how he makes every one imagine, that she speaks the greatest Truth in the World. For this reason I said, that neither the *Prioreff* was entirely to be credited, nor any one particular *Nun*; but that, when the matter is of Moment, enquiry be made of more, that a remedy may be prudently provided. Our *Lord* vouchsafe to give us ever discreet, and holy *Superiors*; for, if they be such, his *Majesty* will afford them light, to the end they may in every thing proceed aright, and understand us: for, by this means all will be very well governed, and Souls go on increasing in Perfection, to the honour, and glory of *God*.



F I N I S.